

North Hertfordshire Local Plan SP9 Design & Sustainability: Assessment

Barkway BK3, 18/01502/OP



1. CONTEXT AND SITE	
NDG Criteria	Comment
C1 Understand and relate well to the site its local and wider context C2 Value heritage, local history and culture	
SPg Criteria	
Positively integrate with adjacent rural and urban communities and contribute to their character and the way the area functions (including addressing cumulative, cross boundary and infrastructure matters)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The application does not cover the whole of the proposed BK3 allocation. Although the Council's clear preference would be to masterplan the current application site and adjoining reserve school land holistically, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) do not wish to participate in a joint masterplanning exercise for this site. 2. Similarly, through the application, HCC have confirmed (January 2022) that this application does not trigger any need for use of the reserve school site at this time and that they will not be seeking s106 contributions towards First School provision as there is sufficient capacity within current arrangements.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. This lack of clarity on the role and eventual use of the adjoining reserve school land provides challenges, particularly as there is presently no demarcation between the two landholdings on the ground. These concerns were reflected in the response to the previous planning application on part of the current application site which identified the risk of piecemeal development and a lack of integration with the existing village. A fragmented approach to masterplanning potentially inhibits delivery of the optimum outcome for the BK3 allocation when viewed as a whole.4. However, in this instance it is considered that determination of this planning application cannot reasonably be held in abeyance due to an unwilling neighbouring landowner. It is therefore necessary for the masterplan material for the current application to address these and other, site-specific issues to the best of its ability to demonstrate compliance with Policy SP9.5. The Council's agreed approval process for Policy SP9¹ states that agreement of masterplan material as part of the grant of planning permission can be appropriate where it has been agreed that the application boundary is also the most appropriate masterplan boundary. In the circumstances, this is the approach that has been taken to this site / application.6. Following amendment, the masterplan document and accompanying plans detail how the development proposals will successfully link into the surrounding communities, destinations (e.g. the local school) and PROW network through enhanced walking and cycling routes, GI and ecological network and the disposition of the layout (see detailed comments below).7. The masterplan and updated plans have been amended to illustrate how the layout (block, street and landscape structure) and alignment of routes within the site have been identified to strongly integrate with these connections.
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¹ Policy SP9 approval process, available at <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/approach-masterplanning>. This document was agreed by the Council's Strategic Sites Project Board in March 2022 and endorsed by Cabinet in June 2022

	<p>8. The relationship with the adjoining reserve school land that forms the remainder of the BK3 allocation has been clarified insofar as is possible in the current circumstances with additional hedgerow planting.</p> <p>9. The site is at the interface between the village edge and the rural countryside and this is reflected in the design response. Barkway has a strong historic landscape setting – including the prominent ridge immediately west of the site and the adjoining Newsells and Cokenach estates. This has informed the use of setbacks and edge treatments which will assist in sensitively knitting the new development into the existing and mitigating the inevitable impacts that significant residential use of the site will have through good design.</p>
2. IDENTITY	
NDG Criteria	Comment
<p>I1 Respond to existing local character and identity.</p> <p>I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive</p> <p>I3 Create character and identity.</p>	
SP9 Criteria	
Create buildings and streets which positively reflect and respond to the local landscape, townscape and historical character	<p>10. The updated Design and Access statement (DAS) accompanying the planning application includes consideration of local character, context and precedents and uses this to inform the proposed layout.</p>

11. The scheme is, in summary, suitably responsive to the site's landscape setting. Existing landscape features, on and off-site trees, hedge lines/vegetation and public rights of way have been used as structuring elements. The application provides the basis of a scheme that can be successfully embedded into its locality.
12. The DAS has been revised and updated to include historic mapping better showing the evolution of the village and site surrounds. Additional information has been provided (p.9 of the DAS) on the post-war development of the northern areas of Barkway in closest proximity to the site. The south-western portion of the application site in particular will have a relationship with this part of the village.
13. The previous plans / design response are now included as an additional iteration in the design evolution of the site which aids in telling the story of the current scheme.
14. Key elements of this contextual analysis including the constraints and opportunities plan are replicated in the Masterplan Summary Report (MSR).
15. There are a few minor points that it would be beneficial to clarify or amend.
 - The list of constraints in both the DAS (Section 3.3) and MSR (Section 2.3) would ideally reference the absence of clear plans or intent for the adjoining reserve school site which forms part of the BK3 allocation as well as the limited opportunities in practical terms for journeys by modes other than the private car.
 - The second bullet point in opportunities might benefit from defining the 'points of interest' – presumably facilities such as the recreation ground and village hall and wider Rights of Way networks.
 - On the constraints map / key the symbols and colour for both the rights of way and the potential pedestrian school access are very similar and would ideally be more easily differentiated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision makes reference to “drawing on the vernacular architecture and urban form of Barkway’s Conservation Area”. It is suggested that this reference should now be to “Barkway” more generally and the specific reference to the Conservation Area should be removed. This would reflect the broader emphasis of the design analysis in the DAS/MSR in response to the masterplan evolution and the Council’s feedback. • Remove reference to “grander” properties in design principle #3 (p.15) and Key Feature L (p.24). Lower density is a sufficient descriptor alongside the character guidance. The detailed design and general disposition of the layout (including the distribution of affordable housing within the site) remains to be determined through reserved matters application(s).
3. BUILT FORM	
NDG Criteria	Comment
B1 Compact form of development B2 Appropriate building types and forms B3 Destinations	
SP9 Criteria	
Create buildings and streets which positively reflect and respond to the local landscape, townscape and historical character	16. The broad approach of a primary street through the site with secondary streets and development blocks to its north and south is supported, as is the proposed differentiation between the character of the western and eastern fields and the central street.

17. The masterplan and parameter plans have been updated to remove lengths of street which previously had no active frontage and to better address, in particular the north/south green corridor. This amendment is particularly welcomed as it embeds this central corridor as a key feature of the development, aiding legibility and encouraging walking, cycling (and horse riding) within, across and beyond the site.

18. The DAS identifies three broad character areas:

- The village street fronting the primary route;
- Residential lanes – formed by the secondary and tertiary routes in the west of the site; and
- Wooded lanes – a lower density area formed by the secondary and tertiary routes in the east of the site.

19. This is supported as a sensible basis for differentiation. The character guidance recognises there may be scope for further subdivision or distinction between the northern and southern elements of the 'residential lanes' given their relationship to northern Barkway / the Newsells estate respectively, though it is considered this is something that can be considered further in the development of reserved matters proposals.

20. As reflected in the site-specific policy, the western area of the site lends itself to a slightly higher intensity of development than the east.

21. An urban design parameter plan has been submitted. This is rather simplistic in that it identifies the significant majority of the site simply as the "urban block structure". Some distinction around (e.g.) density or building heights might assist. However, when the DAS/MSR and supporting plans are read as a whole – particularly having regard to the 'illustrative character area guidance' – there appears to be adequate material against which to judge future applications and secure the intended outcomes.

	<p>22. Deletion of the word “illustrative” would provide some more comfort in this regard. The urban design parameter would ideally also show frontages facing the internal streets of the development blocks – reflecting the illustrative masterplan and guarding against any reversion to areas of ‘dead frontage’ in any final scheme.</p> <p>23. The reference to using design cues from northern Barkway in the southern ‘residential lanes’ area is welcome. This should help provide a legible townscape and coherent variations in character when moving across northern Barkway as a whole (e.g. from Windmill Close through the development to the community and recreation facilities).</p>
4. MOVEMENT	
NDG Criteria	Comment
M1 Integrated network of routes for all modes of transport M2 A clear structure and hierarchy of connected streets M3 well considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users	
SP9 Criteria	
Create integrated, accessible and sustainable transport systems with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive	24. The primary route across the site accords with the policy requirement to explore options for a connecting road between Royston Road and Cambridge Road. This street and its alignment across the southern-central area of the site provides the opportunity to deliver clear gateways and a legible hierarchy of movement and block structure to its north and south.

forms of transport and effectively linking into the surrounding areas

Provide a clear structure and hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets and well-connected footpaths and cycleways integrated with the wider built and natural environment and communities

25. Following feedback on the original plans, the amount of hedgerow to be removed from the frontages to create the access points has been minimised, along the western frontage in particular.
26. The importance of the key node at the intersection of the bridleway corridor and primary street is clearly recognised in the plans and commentary.
27. The secondary street network has been revised through the masterplan process addressing a number of concerns that were raised in the Council's consideration of the original submitted plans. The revised alignments help create a significantly more coherent and integrated scheme and these amendments are welcomed. Any limited departures from the recommendations of the Council's February 2022 feedback are clearly explained in the applicant's commentary.
28. Pedestrian and cycle routes (including recreational routes) are shown aligning to both the street network and the green infrastructure providing edge to edge connectivity plugging into the key access points provided by the primary street and the bridleway.
29. The realignment of the secondary street to the east of the bridleway now provides an opportunity to also allow for walking and cycling along this side of the hedgerow and – potentially through the use of different surface treatments to the bridleway on the west side – provide appropriate environments for both day-to-day and leisure uses of this key axis whilst reducing potential conflict between users (e.g. horse riders and dog walkers / pedestrians). It is agreed that further design resolution can be delivered through the reserved matters process.
30. The (former) pedestrian access shown at the south-west corner has been amended to also cater for cyclists with safe access / egress from Royston Road allowing for access to / from the centre of site by the quieter secondary street and

	<p>connectivity to the wider village and right of way network including the byway route to Reed approximately 200m away.</p> <p>31. Locating the potential pedestrian access to the adjoining reserve school land at the rear of the central square is considered the best option in the current circumstances (i.e. without an allocation-wide masterplan). It allows for connectivity should that land be brought forward in the future but also allows the square to operate as a coherent space in its own right that does not rely upon the adjoining land for its success.</p> <p>32. Additional pedestrian connections through the northern and eastern boundaries are supported in principle subject to a more detailed understanding of any impacts on trees, hedgerows and biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>33. The Access and Movement Plan details proposed improvements in the vicinity of the site including measures to facilitate safe pedestrian and cycle movements along and across Cambridge Road to access the key adjoining social infrastructure facilities (village hall / recreation ground).</p> <p>34. Car parking is currently shown mainly to the side and rear of plots including in courtyard arrangements.</p> <p>35. A high-level specification and cross-section for routes is included in the MDS. There is some inconsistency in references to “residential street” and “residential lanes” between the commentary on the movement framework and character guidance which should be resolved.</p>
5. NATURE	
NDG Criteria	Comment

<p>N1 Provide high quality green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities including play</p> <p>N2 Improve and enhance water management</p> <p>N3 Support rich and varied biodiversity</p>	
<p>SP9 Criteria</p>	
<p>Create an accessible multi-functional green infrastructure network that provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a key structuring and functional place-making feature supporting healthy lifestyles, sport, play and recreation linking into the wider green infrastructure network • a high-quality integrated network to support ecological connectivity, biodiversity net gain, climate adaptation and mitigation linking into the Ecological Network <p>Ensure the effective use of sustainable urban drainage and sustainable water management</p>	<p>36. A baseline Biodiversity Net Gain calculation has been provided using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0. This should be appraised by relevant consultees, along with the existing ecological and arboricultural baseline. There is presently no response to the application from either Herts Ecology or the wildlife trust.</p> <p>37. The BNG report identifies a gain of just of 1% for non-linear (area based) habitat types and nearly 58% for linear habitats (hedgerows).</p> <p>38. The latter figure is well in excess of emerging requirements for 10% net gain. The 1% gain for non-linear habitats feels a little disappointing for a greenfield development site, though it is noted that the existing ecological value of the site has increased through the accretion of further grass species and shrub since the completion of the previous ecological study, raising the baseline figure.</p> <p>39. Furthermore, 10% net gain has not yet been implemented as a statutory requirement. Although the Council encourages new development to aspire towards this target, the policy position in both NPPF and the emerging Local Plan presently require the securing of (an unspecified level of) net gains. In that context, the scheme would be policy compliant subject to technical ratification of these figures and appropriate management measures and regimes to secure the habitat typologies relied upon to achieve these scores.</p>

40. Importantly, the BNG calculation (as well as the updated Phase 1 survey) appear to have been completed by reference to the previous / original plans as shown in the appendices of each document. The revised parameter plans potentially allow for higher net gain given the increased width of the central corridor, the retention and reinstating of more hedgerow along the western frontage and the addition of a new strip of green space running south from the western site access to support the realignment of the secondary street.
41. Furthermore, the habitat area figures for the proposed scheme in the BNG assessment are inconsistent with the public open space figure provided on the land use parameter plan. Table 6 of the BNG assessment (p.18) totals to approximately 2.75 hectares (ha) (excluding vegetated gardens) while the land use parameter plan states 1.96 hectares of public open space are to be provided including play and SUDs.
42. The relationship between public open space including play (see below), habitat for BNG purposes and SUDs needs to be clarified and reconciled to ensure the proposed uses and outcomes are compatible, there is consistency between the various reports, documents and plans and there is no double-counting of spaces or areas for uses or functions that are incompatible. The input of consultees will be important in informing this.
43. These matters should be clarified and, if necessary, the BNG calculation re-run to allow accurate figures to be reported.
44. The ecological survey identifies that two hedgerows meet the NERC Act definition of habitat of principle importance but are unlikely to be important hedgerows under the hedgerow regulations. The applicant's commentary on the Council's February 2022 feedback states these are now identified on the DAS constraints plan but this does not appear to be the case. From Appendix 1 of the ecological survey it might

be inferred that these are the hedgerows along the northern and western edges of the western field but this requires clarification.

45. A 6m buffer is provided either side of the central, north-south hedgerow. This is considered an appropriate and proportionate way to apply the 12m buffer requirement in emerging policy given the assessed ecological value of this feature

46. Subject to the additional information and consultee input referenced above, the broad structure of, and rationale for, the proposed green infrastructure network within the site is supported. It responds to key opportunities and constraints within and around the site including:

- The ecological, landscape and heritage importance of the woodland and trees around the northern and eastern boundaries of the site in particular;
- The bridleway corridor through the site including the existing hedgerow;
- Other hedgerow boundaries; and
- The sensitivity of the adjoining Newsells Park Stud in operational, heritage and landscape terms

47. A Green Infrastructure parameter plan has been provided. This, along with the accompanying commentary in the MDS reflects the Council's request for a clear explanation of the proposed GI provision with high level coding for each area setting out the purpose and approach (e.g. formal & public recreation vs. ecological & naturalistic etc.). Subject to resolution of issues set out in these comments, the general approach is supported.

48. A proposed hedgerow has been introduced along the southern interface with the reserve school land.

49. The site is located close to the existing recreation ground and Cokenach Cricket Ground. The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy identifies spare capacity at these

	facilities and recommends appropriate pitch maintenance to ensure their continued quality. Appropriate contributions should be secured towards this and the existing play provision which will cater for older ages than the on-site LAP.
6. PUBLIC SPACES	
NDG Criteria	Comment
P1 Create well-located high quality and attractive public spaces P2 Provide well-designed spaces that are safe P3 Make sure public spaces support social interaction.	
SP9 Criteria	
Ensure a hierarchy of linked, high quality and attractive public spaces and public realm that is safe, attractive and supports social interaction for all age groups	<p>50. Further information is now provided on key spaces within the development.</p> <p>51. In July 2021, the Council resolved to use <i>Fields in Trust</i> standards and guidelines to inform its approach to open space provision on development sites</p> <p>52. The proposed 1.96ha of open space shown on the land use parameter plan, at face value, exceeds the total requirements arising from applying the <i>Fields in Trust</i> standards and guidelines to a scheme of this scale. A breakdown of requirements for this application by typology are shown in the calculation below based upon a scheme of 140 homes.</p> <p>53. It is envisaged that contributions towards some forms of provision, such as pitch sports, will be made off site (see paragraph 48 above). This reflects the scale of the</p>

site – towards the lower end of the Council’s definition of ‘strategic and significant development’ in Policy SP9 – which means some forms of provision would not be practicable at the sizes shown while existing facilities, such as the recreation ground, are within the accessibility standards recommended by *Fields in Trust*.

54. This gives further comfort that the necessary requirements can be met and that, in broad terms, there will be an appropriate level of green space on site. There are clearly defined areas of amenity space and natural & semi-natural space and a play area shown on the landscape parameter plan and described in the MSR.

55. However, as per paragraph 42, a short clarification or addendum which clearly sets out the proposed relationship between public open space provision, biodiversity net gain and SUDs would be helpful in demonstrating how the various requirements – which can sometimes be complementary and can sometimes conflict – can or will be accommodated.

Open space

	Policy	
Development population	336	
Playing pitches	0.40	hectares
Other outdoor sports	0.13	hectares
Equipped / designated play	0.08	hectares
MUGAs / skateboard etc	0.10	hectares
Parks and Gardens	0.27	hectares
Amenity Green Space	0.20	hectares
Natural and semi-natural	0.60	hectares
Allotments	0.10	hectares
Total open space	1.88	hectares

7. USES	
Criteria	Comment
U1 A mix of uses U2 A mix of house tenures, types and sizes U3 Socially inclusive	
SP9 Criteria	
<p>Plan for integrated and mixed-use communities with walkable locally accessible community, employment and retail facilities</p> <p>Provide a diverse and distinctive range of flexible and adaptable house types and tenures and building forms to meet the needs of the population</p>	<p>56. Through the application and masterplanning process, it has been determined that there is no present need to deliver a school on the adjoining reserve site and this has been excluded from the current application / masterplan.</p> <p>57. A plot is identified for a potential village store. This is located at the south-eastern boundary and provides the opportunity for a local community hub alongside the traditional village hall and recreation ground. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Barkway (Policy BNL3) expresses support for the creation of a multi-functional community hub in the village.</p> <p>58. The Planning Statement accompanying the application states that 40% affordable housing and an appropriate housing mix would be delivered in accordance with plan requirements. Although these are to be dealt with in further detail at reserved matters stage, the illustrative masterplan and character area guidance suggest this should be the case.</p> <p>59. The applicant does not wish to identify or provide self-build plots within the site to diversify the housing offer and address the need identified by the Council's Self Build</p>

	Register. There is no specific policy requirement but the Council's latest monitoring shows insufficient plots have been permitted and any provision would be a positive consideration in the planning balance.
8. HOMES AND BUILDINGS	
NDG Criteria	Comment
H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe external and internal environment H2 Well related to external amenity and public spaces H3 Attention to detail, storage, water, servicing and utilities	
SP9 Criteria	
Adopt the Governments additional technical standards for the size of new homes, water efficiency and in specified circumstances accessibility	60. The DAS and MSR provide guidance on detailed architectural cues and materials that should inform detailed proposals subject to the comments set out in this appraisal.
9. RESOURCES	
NDG Criteria	Comment
R1 Follow the energy hierarchy. R2 Selection of materials and construction techniques	61. High-level sustainability principles and concepts have been added to the DAS and MSR. This recognises, among other matters, that the orientation of the site and

R3 Maximise resilience	<p>proposed street structure provides the opportunity for a significant proportion of either house fronts or gardens to be south facing.</p> <p>62. The approach to flood risk needs to be reconciled with the approach to BNG and open space. Some shallow basin features may be appropriately defined as part of the public open space; significant / fenced off engineering solutions would not.</p>
10. LIFESPAN	
NDG Criteria	
L1 Well-managed and maintained. L2 Adaptable to changing needs and evolving technologies	63. No information provided at this stage.
SP9 Criteria	
Design to last with clear stewardship, management and maintenance strategy	